

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7077
INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 02279

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, TW
SUBJECT: RUMORS OF ROC CRACKDOWN ON PRESBYTERIANS

REF: STATE 093537 (NOTAL)

1. EMBASSY HAS HEARD NOTHING IN RECENT CONTACTS WITH INDEPENDENT POLITICIANS, LOCAL REPORTERS, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, OR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ITSELF TO SUGGEST THERE IS SUBSTANCE TO RUMOR REPORTED REFTEL AND IN COMMERCIAL CABLE FROM PRESIDENT OF TAIWAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH, CHICAGO, THAT GENERAL SECRETARY KAO IS TO BE ARRESTED APRIL 16 AND OTHER PRESBYTERIAN LEADERS PLACED UNDER HOUSE ARREST. FOREIGN EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF LOCAL PRESBYTERIAN HEADQUARTERS TOLD EMBASSY OFFICER APRIL 13 THAT THE CHURCH BELIEVES IT UNLIKELY THAT GOVERNMENT WOULD ARREST REVEREND KAO AT THIS TIME. THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY COMMENTED THAT EMIGRE TAIWANESE IN THE U.S. OFTEN "GET THE BIT BETWEEN THEIR TEETH AND RUN ABOUT WILDLY" CITING AS EXAMPLE RUMORS LAST SUMMER THAT REVEREND KAO HAD BEEN SHOT FOLLOWING THE ISSUANCE OF THE CHURCH'S
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DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS.

2. COMMENT: DESPITE THE SETBACK TO THE GROG REPRESENTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S REELECTION OF KAO AND REAFFIRMATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DECLARATION, WE BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET GIVEN UP ON ITS POLICY OF SEEKING TO DISCREDIT CHURCH LEADERSHIP AND FOMENT OPPOSITION WITH-

IN CHURCH. IN CONVERSATION WITH DCM APRIL 11, VICE
FOREIGN MINISTER CH'EN FU MADE GREAT POINT OF DESCRIBING
ALLEGED UNHAPPINESS AT "GRASSROOTS" OF CHURCH WITH THE
ACTIONS OF THE "SO-CALLED LEADERSHIP." HE SEEMED TO BE
SUGGESTING THAT WAYS WOULD BE FOUND FOR THE CHURCH TO
CLEAN ITS OWN HOUSE WITHOUT GOVERNMENT RESORT TO THE
MAILED FIST. SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT MORE
SOPHISTICATED APPROACH FAIL, WE WOULD NOT, OF COURSE,
RULE OUT POSSIBILITY OF ARRESTS OR OTHER DIRECT ACTION.
AT SAME TIME, GOVERNMENT'S BEHAVIOR IN RECENT MONTHS ON
WHOLE RANGE OF OPPOSITIONIST ACTIONS SUGGEST POLICY IS
TO AVOID CONFRONTATION WHICH WOULD RUN AFOUL OF U.S.
HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY AND SUBJECT GROG TO UNFAVORABLE PUBLI-
CITY IN U.S. THUS FAR PRESBYTERIAN ISSUE DOES NOT
APPEAR TO BE REGARDED BY GROG AS SUFFICIENTLY THREATENING
TO WARRANT DEPARTURE FROM THAT POLICY. UNGER

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